

REMARKS

There remains pending in this application claims 1-26, of which claims 1 and 14 are independent. No claims have been added or cancelled.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the above application is respectfully sought.

The invention as now set forth in independent claim 1 is directed to a sheet processing apparatus that includes sheet holding means for holding a plurality of supplied sheet sin stack, first sheet stacking means on which sheets have been held by sheet holding means are stacked, second sheet stacking means , provided downstream of the first sheet stacking means with respect to a sheet conveying direction, on which sheets are stacked, first sheet conveying means for discharging the sheets stacked in the first sheet stacking means to the second sheet stacking means and second sheet conveying means for conveying the sheets stacked on the first sheet stacking means toward the second sheet stacking means. As now recited in claim 1, the invention is characterized in that after the sheets stacked on th first sheet stacking means are conveyed by the second sheet conveying means toward the second sheet stacking means by a predetermined amount so that a downstream edge of the sheet stacked on the first sheet stacking means protrudes in a downstream side beyond a downstream edge of the sheets held by the sheet holding means, the first sheet conveying means conveys the sheets stacked on the first sheet stacking means and the sheets held by the sheet holding means simultaneously to thereby discharge the sheets discharged on the first sheet stacking means to the second sheet stacking means and to stack the sheets held by the sheet holding means onto the first sheet stacking means.

Claim was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Kawano et al. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the rejection is respectfully traversed.

Kawano et al. provides a path 19 corresponding to sheet holding means of the present invention, an intermediate stacker 221 corresponding to first sheet stacking means of the present invention, a sheet discharging tray corresponding to second sheet stacking means of the present invention, discharging rollers 5A and 5B corresponding to first sheet conveying means of the present invention, and a discharging claw 28 corresponding to second sheet conveying means of the present invention. However, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's conclusion that the conveyance rollers 21A and 21B and conveyance auxiliary member 23B in Kawano et al. correspond to the first sheet conveyance means.

More specifically, discharging rollers 5A and 5B in Kawano et al. do not correspond to "first sheet conveying means" of the present invention. In Kawano et al., discharging rollers 5A and 5B only discharge sheets stacked on the intermediate stacker to the sheet discharging tray 6. Kawano et al. fails to disclose or suggest the present invention in claim 1 wherein the first sheet conveying means conveys both the sheets stacked on the first sheet stacking means and the sheets held by the sheet holding means simultaneously.

Therefore, claim 1 is not anticipated from Kawano et al. the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) should be withdrawn.

The invention as recited in claim 14 relates to a sheet processing apparatus including a buffer unit which holds a plurality of supplied sheets in a stack, a processing tray on which sheets have been held by said buffer unit, a sheet stacker, provided downstream of said

processing tray with respect to a sheet conveying direction, on which sheets are stacked, sheet discharging rotary member which discharges the sheets stacked on said processing tray to said sheet stacker; and discharging assist which conveys the sheets stacked on said processing tray toward said sheet stacker.

Claim 14 is characterized in that the sheet discharging rotary member conveys the sheets stacked on the processing tray and the sheets held by the buffer unit simultaneously to thereby discharge the sheets stacked on the processing tray to the sheet stacker and to stack the sheets held by said buffer unit onto the processing tray.

In contrast and as noted in connection with claim 1, discharging rollers 5A and 5B corresponding to “sheet discharging rotary member” not conveyance rollers 21A and 21B and conveyance auxiliary member 23B.

In Kawano et al, discharging rollers 5A and 5B merely discharges sheets stacked on the intermediate stacker to the sheet discharging tray 6. Kawano et al. also fails to disclose the advantages of the present invention in claim 14 resulting from the sheet discharging rotary member conveying the sheets stacked on said processing tray and the sheets held by said buffer unit simultaneously.

Therefore, the present invention in claim 14 is not anticipated from Kawano et al. The rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) should be withdrawn.

The remaining claims in the above application are dependent claims which depend either directly or indirectly from either of claim 1 or claim 14 and are therefore patentable over the art of record for reasons noted above with respect to claims 1 and 14. In addition, each

recite features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied art. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding matters in the above application have been addressed and that this application is in condition for allowance.

Applicants respectfully request entry of the above amendments as they are being presented in an earnest effort to advance prosecution and place the application in condition for allowance. These amendments were not presented earlier as Applicants were of the firm belief that the claims previously on file were already in allowable form.

Favorable consideration and early passage to issue are respectfully sought.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Stahl', written over a horizontal line.

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